

Theater

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## Bay Players Search for a Stage

By KEITH L. MARTIN

According to William Shakespeare, "all the world's a stage."

While this may be true, the Bay Players are just trying to carve out a small part of the Duxbury landscape for themselves before it's curtains for their community theatre group.

Having bounced from location to location around the South Shore to put on performances, the acting troupe is now looking for a permanent space of their own to keep their long-running tradition going where it first began.

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## Community Theater Group Searching for a Stage

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Established in 1956 by *Clipper* co-founder Bobbie Cutler and resident Larry Dunn after the Duxbury Playhouse on Bay Road closed, the group of local actors has performed over 120 shows with their most recent a production of *The Children's Hour* last spring.

After performing at Duxbury High School was no longer possible for the group, they shifted to theaters in Plymouth, Marshfield and, most recently, the Kingston Intermediate School. But the frequent moves have meant infrequent performances, with the group's last two performances scrapped due to a hard time attracting staff and an audience who knows where to find them.

"Our hope is for a place to call our own," said Bay Players Co-President Sims McCormick. "We want a stable place so people know where we are and who we are and to be a part of community theater, and Duxbury is where this all started, so we'll re-establish ourselves here. This is our home and we're coming back to claim it."

McCormick said that the group is looking for that ideal

space, not as large as the Performing Arts Center, but also not as small as a basement, where they can bring quality community theatre to the residents of the South Shore as they have for nearly 50 years.

"We've talked about aligning ourselves with a church group, but felt that would limit us as First Parish Church is the only one with a stage and that doesn't allow us to do theater-in the round," said Bay Players charter member Natalie Goodrich.

The ideal space, said McCormick, would be one that is flexible, to allow stage performances as well as theater-in-the-round, but more important, provide the traveling troubadours with a permanent home.

"It's having a place to call our own," said McCormick of Cove Street. "It's about having a stable place so people know where we are and know more about us and want to get involved themselves in community theatre."

Co-president Theresa Chiasson, a member of the Players since 2002, said that a relationship with neighbors is what groups like theirs are all about.

"What makes community theatre is being around a home base and giving back to the community and them giving back to you," she said. "We don't have that now. What we do have is: Who are you? Where are you? Duxbury is one of the South Shore towns that is very much into supporting the arts and we need some supporting."



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Sims McCormick

Chiasson added that the group is always looking for community involvement, from actors to ushers and stagehands to stage directors, and that too will get citizens involved in a local theater company.

Both McCormick and Chiasson believe that there is a space out there looking for a tenant but never considered a

theater troupe, be it a historical building or an unused barn. Having a place to call home, they say, will not just enrich the artistic makeup of the community, but also refresh their membership of nearly 20 members.

"We are doing smaller productions with limited sets and casts and to have a space you can fill, that really builds

performing for an audience and getting a response, whether it's good or bad."

Because theater is a special medium versus seeing a movie, said McCormick, that energy needs to be present for both actor and audience to create a successful performance. But in order for the show to go on, there must be a stage.

"Community theater is a real gift and such a wonderful resource to have and we want to continue that and make it stronger and we hope Duxbury feels the same way," said McCormick.

Plymouth's Stephanie Gallagher, a Bay Player for four years, said that with over 120 shows and the strong tradition of the group, it would be sad to the members and the community if the curtain came down for good.

"There is so much history in this group that the community may not know, but if they did, we hope they won't let it go by the wayside," she said.

For more information on the Bay Players or to assist them in finding a permanent stage, go to [www.bayplayers.org](http://www.bayplayers.org) or call McCormick at 781-934-6959.

morale and it doesn't matter if it's an audience of 30 or 1,000 people," said Chiasson. "An audience member who sits next to an empty seat or two feels bad for the actors or that they spent money on a show that's not full, but if you have a full audience, it becomes 'wow, this is the place to be.'"

Chiasson added that "nothing lights my fire more than